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SDSU Football Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2017

SDSU offensive coordinator Jeff Horton

Opening statement:

"(We're) excited to be here today. It's a great day in San Diego State athletics with Marshall Faulk going into the college's Hall of Fame. What a tremendous honor that is for him and the school and the program. Coach Dutcher and coach Terry are off to great starts in basketball and then we'll be heading to Texas for the bowl game there against the United States Military Academy. Great opportunity for us. We recruit in Texas, I'm from Texas, Juwan is from Texas, we have about 13 kids on our team and five coaches from Texas. But the best thing is the military academy is having their best season in a long time and it's a tremendous opportunity for us. I told our receivers if they don't think we throw the ball enough, Army has thrown it 18 times all year. We're like an air raid team compared to Army. If it wasn't on TV, it would be a really short game. I think they are averaging over 400 yards per game rushing, they obviously like to run the ball. It's going to be a great opportunity, a great city with Texas hospitality. I know we're excited about going home, I know the team is excited to go play and have a good time. It's a great reward for them and the hard work they put in this year."

On an adjective or adverb describing how Rashaad Penny has been treated with the postseason awards:

"I can think of several but being in a press conference in this setting, I need to be politically correct. Whether it was the Doak Walker Award or the Heisman Trophy, it's supposed to reward the best player in college football. Whether some people think he is or isn't, obviously we think he is, but to not even be in the final selections for either award — I just want to know what the criteria is and what it's based on. Maybe some people here got a chance to vote on the thing, maybe I didn't see the fine print about if you're from a non-Power 5 conference school it really doesn't matter. The way I understand it is the best running back in the country according to Doak Walker and the best player in the country according to the Heisman Trophy, how he's not even a part of that is mind-boggling. We all know who he is and what he is. The young man has done everything right on and off the field, has been as good of an ambassador for this program and university as you could possibly be and he takes it better than a 60-year old man does. I'm more upset than he is, at least outwardly so. So let's go down to Fort Worth and put on a show, you don't need a trophy to understand [how important you are]. Youth sports, everybody gets a trophy. So we're going to try and win the game and have a great game for him and he can ride off into the sunset knowing in my mind that he's the best player in the country. Look at the production on the field, what are they basing it on? For him not to be included in it, it just doesn't make sense."

On if the Armed Forces Bowl was a surprise:

"I think we were excited about it. We played in the Las Vegas Bowl, the Hawai'i Bowl, the Idaho Potato Bowl, we've been to New Mexico and Arizona. I think it's a great change of pace and gave the chance for all the Mountain West teams to get into bowl games. We get a chance to go somewhere else, Texas is a great place to be. It's early enough that our kids can be home for Christmas, it gives us plenty of time to get a lot of great prep, we have like an extra spring practice for our young kids. (There will be" national exposure on TV on a Saturday on ESPN and a 2:30 p.m. game so all the people that were sleeping during the year when we played that don't realize that Rashaad Penny was the best player in the country – maybe they'll be awake at 2:30 on that Saturday. But they'll probably be out shopping for Christmas or something so they still won't see him play – we'll have to find a way to get that word out there and he'll have to have a big game. I know our kids are excited about it, (quarterback) coach Blane Morgan has been to it several times when he was at the Air Force Academy and he said it's a great time and people treat you well. Lot of guys from Texas get a chance to go back home, they've been bragging about Whataburger vs. In-n-Out burger so we'll have an eat off to see which burger is best and we have some other stuff lined up for them, maybe we'll have guys coming back saying 'y'all' after those five days."

On if he was expecting to go to the Armed Forces Bowl or somewhere else:

"When you start getting shopped around, all the conferences have bowl tie-ins so it's not where you have four or five things to choose from, you don't get different bids, they choose you. All the conferences have to be selected into the bowls that they have tie-ins with and then it comes down to the few that are still out there. People are sometimes under the misconception that you get several bids and you're picking the one you play in. This is like going to a dance and then someone comes up and asks you to dance and you go, it's not four or five people asking you. To have a chance to play in a bowl game is a great opportunity, we never take that for granted, it's a reward for an outstanding season. We don't see any money from it so it doesn't matter how much they are paying out. It's an opportunity for our team to stay together for another three weeks and have some fun and win 11 games again for the third year in a row. There are only a handful of teams in the country that have done that so it's an outstanding opportunity for our kids as well as our university."

SDSU sophomore running back Juwan Washington**On what the players think about Rashaad Penny's snub from the postseason awards:**

"Like coach Horton said, I think all the players are more upset than Rashaad is because week in and week out he produces on the field and never really had any character issues on or off the field. So we don't know why he wasn't selected as a finalist for any of those awards but we take it with a grain of salt because he's going to play no matter what and he's going to give us his best and he's going to help us win games."

On what he's learned playing with Donnel Pumphrey and Rashaad Penny:

"I take a lot. It was fun watching Pumphrey and then Rashaad this year. You just sit back and watch the things that they do and how they practice and how they work in the offseason. It's something that you learn from and take in so when it's my turn, I can go on and do the things they did."

On competing against Army:

"It's always a great opportunity for us because we preach in our program mental and physical toughness and those are the guys that do it all the time, you know that they're going to play hard no matter what. It's good for us to see how we compete with them and it's always fun to play a team like that."

SDSU defensive coordinator Danny Gonzales

On the upcoming bowl game:

"Thank you for coming, we're very excited to be playing in the 15th annual Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl. We're going up against a great opponent in the Army Black Knights who, offensively, are a great football team. They average 368 yards per game rushing, that's number one in the country. They are averaging 31 points per game, they take care of the football similarly to our offense, they are fourth in the country in time of possession, I think we're ninth. They have us by 36 seconds so I told coach Horton we need to run a couple more plays to change that. In 691 rushing attempts on the season I think they fumbled the ball four times so they take very good care of the football. They don't throw it a lot, their starting quarterback Ahmad Bradshaw is a great player, a 5-11, 205-pound kid runs the ball well and has only thrown the ball 39 times on the entire season. Usually when he throws it they are wide open so he doesn't miss. We've got a great challenge, they do a triple option like we just saw against New Mexico and they run it similar to Air Force, the two triple option with double wing backs, so we've got a lot to prepare for. Thank God we have three weeks, which gives you a little bit better chance but doesn't make it any easier. We're really excited to play them in a bowl game with all the tradition that they have. They have a very important game this weekend against Navy, probably their most important game of the season. They ended Navy's winning streak that they had last year so they are excited to get an opportunity up in Philadelphia this weekend. It'll be fun to watch, we're excited we have an opportunity to play a great opponent in a great bowl game."

On what it means to play Army:

"It's awesome and we have the utmost respect especially in this program. Coach Long's father was in the military for a long time, my father is an army veteran and served in Vietnam so there is a lot of respect within our staff and our team. What the Black Knights have done, coach Monken has done a phenomenal job of getting them to where they are at with an opportunity to win nine games if they beat Navy this Saturday. We are honored to be on the same field as them because they protect all our liberties and freedoms and we understand that. We're very grateful for what they do, they put their lives on the line so that we can live the lives that we live in this wonderful country. Now when the whistles blow on that Saturday, for those 60 minutes, that doesn't matter, but when those 60 minutes are over we're extremely honored and proud of those guys. We feel safe and we live in a wonderful country because of them."

SDSU senior defensive lineman Sergio Phillips

On it being in his hands if Army is going to run the ball that much:

"Yeah, it's going to be the front seven actually. We're going to try and stop the run so Parker (Baldwin) won't have to make all the tackles. But they pretty much run an option, so we've seen it before and we're going to do the best we can to stop the run."

On going back to Texas:

"It's a blessing to go back to Texas because some of my family has never seen me play but they will be able to this time. We have a lot more players that are probably excited too because we have a bunch from Texas."

SDSU junior safety Parker Baldwin

On the bowl game:

"It's exciting because I have a lot of family in Texas as well as Arkansas so it's only about a five or six hour drive for a lot of my family members. Both sets of grandparents are going to get to see me play in college for the first time and my family in Texas will be able to see me play football for the first time so it's very exciting for me as well. I'm glad to have a lot of family and friends out to the game."

On what it means to play Army:

"It's an honor to play Army West Point. I took a visit to Army when I was in junior high school and I saw everything they go through. They took me through a freshman's day at Army and it was crazy to see how hectic their schedule is and what they go through every single day and their commitment to the classroom and to football. Especially visiting there, it made me have more respect for everything they go through and it's going to be fun to get an opportunity to see how tough we are and get an opportunity to play them."

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